Carbondale News

Volume 111 No. 1 Wednesday, January 5, 1983 25¢

Historical Society opposes Post Office relocation; Postmaster will explain need for move this Thursday

By BARBARA WROBLESKI

Should the Carbondale Post Office continue to operate from its present location or should it be relocated in a new building on Dundaff Street? The pros and cons of the issue will be aired at a public meeting sponsored by the Carbondale Historical Society on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. in the Berean Baptist Church. Postmaster Gerald Barrett and Historical Society members will present both sides of the matter and hold a question-and-answer period.

Postmaster Barrett told the NEWS that a new post office building is necessary, since the present building neither affords enough operating space now, nor room for expansion in the future. Louis Scombordi, post office superintendent of operations, elaborated, saying, "The office isn't functional for the amount of mail we handle. You should see what it's like here at 8:30 every morning when there are 12 mail carriers and six clerks trying to get around each other to do their work."

Scombordi believes that crowded conditions in the office present a safety problem, "and luckily we've had no accidents." The superintendent stated that he has studied ways of rearranging the office, but said nothing can be done to improve the close, congested conditions.

"People are trying to squeeze through the two small walkways between mail bins, hampers and baskets. Also, each morning there are one or two large package conveyances on wheels in the aisles. They're about six feet high, eight feet long and four feet wide," Scombordi commented.

The superintendent noted that the building could be remodeled to enhance and create more work space, but the Postal Service real estate officials in Philadelphia advised that it would cost less to build a new post office than have the present structure remodeled.

Scombordi pointed out that the idea of building a new post office is nothing new. "It's been discussed for about ten years, and the land on Dundaff Street was purchased in 1979. The project was put on the back burner because of the economy," he explained. Barrett noted that bids for a new building were opened by postal officials on November 23, and will be awarded within 60 days.

Kay Shifler, a member of the Historical Society's Board of Advisors, told the NEWS that the Society wants the post office to continue working out of its present location. "The post office was busier in years past, and the population was greater than it is today, so we can't see why a larger building is needed, because the office handles less mail these days," Mrs. Shifler noted.

She added that the Society considers the building important architecturally and wouldn't want it to be left empty and fall into disrepair. "We don't need another empty building on Main Street," Mrs. Shifler mentioned.

S. Robert Powell, Society president, said that he informed Postmaster Barrett that the Society is interested in the upkeep of the building, and wrote to various local and state officials informing them of the organization's regret that a decision has apparently been made to have a new post office built.

In a letter to Congressman Joseph McDade, Powell wrote, "If a half million dollars is available in federal funds for the construction of a new post office, it would be more beneficial to renovate the present post office and other historically importnt buildings in the city." In a letter to Postmaster General William Bolger, the Society pointed out that if the post office is moved out of the central business district, it would give the area an abandoned appearance and "perpetuate the idea that Carbondale has had its days and ever since the demise of the coal industry, has been failing."

Keeping the post office on Main Street will give the impression of a vital downtown area, and would be more attractive to businesses coming into the area, Powell pointed out. "We're not against progress, and we know that new buildings are needed. But we must arrive at a balance between the old and the new, and we must ask if potting the post office on Dundaff Street would be best for the community."

The Society also fears that the Neo-Classical post office building will be purchased by parties who will ruin or change its exterior and destroy its beauty and architectural significance, Powell added.

If postal officials decide to go ahead with bulding a new post office, Powell and Mrs. Shifler stated that the Society may possibly conduct a Walkathon Protest in which members will march in front of the post office carrying signs to voice their opposition.

Postmaster Barrett noted that the U.S. Postal Service sent a letter to the city administration informing them that the building is for sale. City managing director Joseph Masco told the NEWS that he wrote a letter of interest to the Service, asking the price the agency is seeking for the structure. "Right now, the city has no plans for using the building and we're just looking for information on it," Masco said.

Barrett mentioned that if the city doesn't buy the building, it will be placed on the open market and sold for its appraised value.

page 1